

 **TODAY'S "SHORT TOPIC"**  
**Criminalizing Controversial  
Leadership Decisions: Is it  
Politics, Tyranny, or .....  
BOTH?**

By Stephen L. Bakke  January 13, 2015



*Here's what provoked me:*

*I saw this trend coming a few years ago when, in a speech I stated: "We should continually examine how we react and be sure we don't start to unintentionally punish the right behavior ..... We must guard against starting to criminalize actions that are honest mistakes, or the inevitable occasional failure of a legitimate idea ..... to criminalize honest risk-taking that fails ..... Failure is part of the natural business cycle." And now the concept criminalizing risk and honest mistakes has crept into political strategies.*

*Here's my response:*

**Criminalizing Controversial Leadership Decisions: Is it Politics, Tyranny, or ..... BOTH?**

How easily it flows off some people's tongues – i.e. that George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, et al. should be considered criminals for their approval of enhanced interrogation (they call it torture) during their term in office. Where does this all lead? As Richard Metz points out in his letter of 1-4: "The road to criminalization of government policy would lead to the end of civilization and, ultimately, to anarchy and Hell itself."

How true that is! We should continually examine how we react and be sure we don't start to unintentionally punish the right behavior. We must guard against trying to criminalize actions that are controversial but honest decisions by government leaders, or the inevitable occasional failure of a legitimate idea. We mustn't criminalize honest risk-taking that fails – failure is part of the natural governing process.

The attempt to criminalize legitimate leadership decisions just because they are controversial or because they turn out to be mistakes, is terribly misguided. To do so, no matter by what political party, is at best cheap politics, but can also lead to a type of serious tyranny!

